

Senate Bill 244 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Darryl Webster

Position: FAV

Good morning Chair Jackson and members of the Budget and Taxation Pension Subcommittee.

My name is Darryl Webster, Commissioner for Somerset County District 2 and retired Maryland Division of Corrections employee with 30 years of service. I am also a friend of the Collins family and I am here in support of Senate Bill 244.

I met Officer Gregory Collins in 1998 at Eastern Correctional Institution where we were both employed. I was a supervisor on the same shift as Greg. He and I were both on the Tactical Team and we became friends. Greg was just the type of person you knew you could count on, which is very important in corrections.

3 short years after being hired at ECI, on June 4, 2001, Greg was found shot and killed in his pickup truck not far from his family home in Vienna, Maryland.

For 18 years the case went unsolved. For quite some time his bullet riddled truck sat at the Maryland State Police Barracks in Easton and when in the area I would look at his truck and just think "somebody has to know something, they just aren't talking".

Finally, a suspect was identified and arrested for Greg's murder. The suspect was tried and found guilty of 1st and 2nd degree murder along with other charges, and is now serving life without the possibility of parole. The suspect was a member of the DMI gang and committed the murder for reasons associated with the gang.

On October 8, 2021 Anne Harvey, Acting Commissioner of Corrections, officially declared the death of Officer Gregory Collins a line of duty death.

In closing: Nearly 22 years have passed since Officer Collins was murdered and a lot has been learned by the family and those of us close to them. We thank you for your time and consideration and we are asking for a favorable decision for Senate Bill 244.

SB244- FINAL Talking Points.Lena (Collins) William

Uploaded by: Lena Williams

Position: FAV

- Good morning, Chair Jackson and members of the Budget and Taxation Pensions Subcommittee.
- My name is Lena Williams, the mother of Sydney Collins, the widow of Correctional Officer Gregory Collins. Greg was a former Marine, a former Navy Seabee and a member of the Maryland Army National Guard at the time of his death.
- For those who are not familiar with my story, just after midnight on June 4, 2001, my husband left his job as a correctional officer at Eastern Correctional Institution. He never made it home.
- After hours of waiting, I began making phone calls to friends, family, and ultimately the police to report him missing.
- My husband was found murdered, he was shot and killed on his way home, and his killer was not arrested for another 18 years.
- That day has and will forever continue to change my life. As a new mother at 27 years old, I was made a widow. I instantly became a single parent and sole provider to our infant daughter. An unbearable change caused by a horrific act.
- When our daughter, Sydney was old enough to understand our reality, I had to tell her that her father was murdered. There were no answers to bring her closure, to ease the pain, tears, emptiness, and loss she felt. A conversation a mother should

never have to have with her child. A child who could not possibly understand or process why her father was murdered.

- This tragedy will always be with me. My daughter and I have suffered great emotional stress for the past 22 years. We were robbed of our life with Greg.
- It was not until a suspect was identified, arrested, and convicted that anyone understood Greg was killed because he had been a correctional officer and was determined to be an in the line of duty death. A hit had been put out on him by a former inmate and gang member.
- Had this information been available at the time of Greg’s death, I would have been able to apply for the Correctional Officer’s Retirement System Special Death Benefit for individuals who were killed because of their job.
- While no one should have to experience the loss my daughter, our family, Greg’s coworkers, and our friends went through, when such tragedies occur, the availability of the death benefit aids those who have suffered the loss of a loved one.
- I now find myself in a position to support a bill that is intended to aid my family. We unfortunately lost Greg, who died by the hands of another, solely because of the career that he chose.

- In conclusion, I thank you for your time and ask that you provide a FAVORABLE report for Senate Bill 244.

SB 244 Testimony - Carozza_FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Mary Beth Carozza

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

**SB 244 – Correctional Officers’ Retirement System – Special Death Benefits - Applicability
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza**

Thank you, Chair Jackson, and members of the distinguished Senate Budget and Taxation Pension Subcommittee for allowing me to present Senate Bill 244 – Correctional Officers’ Retirement System – Special Death Benefits – Applicability.

Last year, Senate Bill 198 passed unanimously out of both chambers and was signed into law by Governor Hogan. That bill ensured that a death benefit of \$125,000 would be paid to the surviving spouse, child, dependent parent, or estate of a public safety officer who was killed as a result of their job responsibilities and duties. Senate Bill 198 also established a timeline; the application for the special death benefits must be submitted for approval within three years that the evidence is found that the decedent was killed because of their job.

The bill before you, Senate Bill 244, has been specifically, narrowly crafted to enable one of my constituents to apply for these very special death benefits. Lena Williams, who will go into further detail in her own testimony, is the widow of Correctional Officer Gregory Collins who was shot and killed by a gang member in June, 2001. At that time, Ms. Williams received a general death benefit.

Under SB 198, Ms. Williams would have been eligible for a special death benefit except that Officer Collins died before January 1, 2006. This bill simply allows her to receive an adjusted special death benefit.

Working with Maryland Retirement and Pension Systems Legislative Director Anne Gawthrop on this customized bill, Senate Bill 244 specifically narrows the applicability of the special death benefits to Lena Williams’ special circumstances. The bill will only be in effect for six months, from June 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023, allowing Lena Williams time to apply for these benefits.

Mr. Chair and members of the Pensions Subcommittee, Lena Williams and her family have suffered from the brutal murder of her husband, Correctional Officer Greg Collins who served our State with honor in a dangerous job and ended up making the ultimate sacrifice.

We have an obligation to Ms. Williams and her family to ensure that this special death benefit is available to this family.

I truly appreciate your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully ask for a swift and favorable report on SB 244.